

## Student Suggestions from 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Sustainability Workshop for Students

*On August 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Environmental Science and Waste Technology Division sponsored a student workshop, which posed the question: How Will the Laboratory Sustain Itself as a Center of Excellence? The first day of the workshop was devoted to presentations from LANL managers as well as national speakers on a variety of perspectives relevant to this topic. On the second day, students worked in teams to brainstorm their own suggestions for this issue, which they presented to a panel of Laboratory Senior Managers. The following is an edited compilation of their suggestions, preceded by an Executive Summary.*

### **Executive Summary**

**Students want to make the best use of the short time they are here. There is frustration with job placements that lack challenge or do not match their background, as well as time lost in excessive training classes or waiting for equipment and clearances. They want to know *before* they arrive where they are going and what they will be doing.**

**Suggestions were made on how Human Resources could be more proactive in the recruitment and hiring process, for example, sorting and forwarding resumes to the appropriate group. Students like the Bradbury Museum orientation and underscore the importance of a good first impression. Great emphasis is placed on quality mentoring as the key to a successful experience and many suggestions were made on improving mentor-student relationships.**

**A strong student association stabilized by a full-time staff member, as well as more useful information on social and community events, would be welcome. Mass transportation to Santa Fe would increase housing availability and provide a more diverse and entertaining environment than the town of Los Alamos. Students are concerned by the low morale at the Laboratory and encourage LANL to create a better public image. The hiring moratorium may be discouraging serious consideration of future employment with LANL.**

## Recruitment

- E-mail recruiting packets to schools that don't get canvassed, cultivating contacts in specific departments
- HR should sort resumes by interests/background and send to appropriate Laboratory Divisions
- Diversity of schools and backgrounds is important.
- LANL alumni recruit from their former schools
- Enthusiastic recruiters
- Can be improved by:
- Recruiters give 'direct contacts' at LANL in recruit's field of interest, i.e. email, phone number.
- Recruit from the inside out: students employed at LANL spread the word within their own school
- Develop relationships with college campus career offices
- Present more good staff where the public will see it
- Encourage college conferences in which LANL students present to other students.
- Publicize research, development and idea exchange at LANL.

## Application & Hiring Process

- Make a good 1<sup>st</sup> impression!
- New Hire Orientation
  - Information sessions *for students, by students*
  - Ice-breaker introductions
  - Generate exciting options for students
  - Provide information about student association
  - Provide informational resources, i.e. homepages, email
  - Assign a student buddy who has Laboratory experience
- Student advisors in Division should be more efficiently used
- Student Liaison Office – lab wide
- More consistent and complete orientations
- During a summer internship, too much time is spent in training and set-up, which reduces the time available for work and learning.
- Eliminate bad student experiences by monitoring and mentoring – one unhappy student can negatively influence future recruits as well as current LANL students.
- Keep the academic connection with U.C.
- Continue to analyze, improve, and expand student programs

## UGS Program

- Determine student goals (career or summer paycheck) and assign jobs accordingly

## Active Community Involvement

- More programs to bridge the gap with community
- K-12 community outreach with Rio Arriba schools
- Lab employees could teach one class in NNM High Schools to encourage careers

in science/math/computer science

- Science fairs
- Promote higher education
- Reduce dropout rate
- Break down diversity gap
- Recruit New Mexican workers

### Retention

- More student networking
- Publication containing useful information for students, e.g. not just '*biking is fun*', but where trails are and how to rent a bike.
- Quality Mentorship
- 3-month plan for students
- Create specialized tasks to retain students. Avoid
  - Unimportant/irrelevant work
  - Data entry
  - Repetitious tasks where learning is minimal
  - Lack of closure
- Student should have a better understanding of division's mission and purpose
- More involvement in group's meetings
- Encourage students to attend conferences and Laboratory colloquia.
- HR: create links for students to make contact with particular groups
- Implement a Student Advisory Board at all divisions, brown bag lunch series and mini poster session, as is done at ESH
- Upgrade facilities and instruments.
- Increase funding for non-weapon research
- Topic expansion at research library
- Maintain continuity with U.C.

### Strong Student Association

- More funding
- Publicity
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Funded position to stabilize
- Community Outreach
- Social life
- Education
- Variety of events
- Develop student discounts in community
- College night/student focused activities/mixers

### F/T Staff Retaining

- Increase benefits, salary & compensation to market value (especially CIC)
- Flex hours: work/life integration child care, work from home
- Advertise positions with flexible research opportunities

### End Hiring Moratorium

- Discourages students to see a future at LANL
- Affects staff morale
- Hiring loopholes breed resentment and confusion

### Mass Transit to Santa Fe, Espanola & Pojoaque

- Will help with student housing
- Will help students live in a more diverse and entertaining environment
- Will provide options to living in Los Alamos
- Will ease up the summer housing crunch

### Pay Scale

- Pay scale should be closer to what industry can offer
- Cost of living in LA is high

### **Promotion**

- Keep morale high so employees speak highly of the Lab
- More proactive and less reactive, e.g. punishing everyone with standdowns
- Less ordered and more “chaordic”
- Community education through public meetings in NNM
- Emphasize the great science the laboratory does
- Publications that are accessible and comprehensible to public
- Education starting in elementary schools in NNM to dispel LANL/radiation myths
- Science fairs and poster sessions
- More attractive atmosphere/facilities/infrastructure
- Emphasize the good
- Change the public perception of the laboratory
  - As a bomb factory
  - As responsible for environmental degradation
  - As a self-serving government agency that is not candid with the public
  - The perceptions will change as the reality of these change

### Proactive Human Resources

- Publicize net application/resume database
- Set and define goals
- Re-evaluate recruiting process
- Define their own mission statement
- Increase involvement with student programs

- Monitor mentors
- Monitor student association

### **Mentorship**

- Revise Mentor program
- Student/mentor should engage regularly
- Mentor should not be the Supervisor
- Allow students to meet group staff and choose a mentor
- Have primary and secondary mentors
- Encourage outside meeting with mentor and talk about career and life advice, not just the project being worked
- The Mentor:
  - Should have the time, skills and desire
  - Should attend mandatory mentor seminar
  - Should solicit student feedback
- Incentives for Mentors
  - Training
  - Recognition
- Accountability
  - Mentor selection/review by supervisor
  - Line management involvement with student
- Positive Mentoring
  - Develop work plan during first week
  - Tools that should be available at the start, include workstations, computers, clearance where needed, training
  - Focused and flexible job description
  - Set goals with student
  - Advocate for student
- Mentors can promote
  - Good/bad work ethic
  - Respect/disrespect
  - Good/bad work environment